



Watershed Stewards: Earlene and Dan Duncan – Learning, Doing, Committing!

Submitted by Kay Schultz



Earlene and Dan Duncan do not rest on their laurels. They have new loves and it shows. Although they take delight in their grandchildren, as do many retirees, they give enormously to the native ecology of their community and neighbors. After retirement, Earlene enrolled in the Frederick County Master Gardener program. Learning a lot about native plants, she helped guide and provide resources to her homeowners association, the Liberty Village Cohousing Community, the first landowner to partner with the **Monocacy & Catoclin Watershed Alliance** and install a rain garden in November 2006.

Joined by her husband Dan, the **Liberty Village Cohousing Community homeowners association** went on to add two more rain gardens. Dan and Earlene also helped facilitate and plant a rain garden at Liberty Elementary and then four such gardens at the adjoining **Libertytown Park**. They organized volunteer planting events involving local scout troops and residents including their granddaughter, Kayla

Duncan. In order to help connect the teachers and students at Liberty Elementary with their rain garden, Earlene and Dan met weekly during late spring with students and teachers of three classes to weed, plant, water, and mulch the garden. Having done such a good job with the rain garden, Earlene and Dan helped the school groups enhance and maintain butterfly gardens on the school property established by a local Girl Scout troop. Earlene has developed a special interest in and knowledge about rain gardens - she made a presentation at the Meadows homeowners association. She often conducts miniseminars and tours for visitors to their Liberty Village Cohousing Community. She also staffs a booth at the Frederick County Fair on rain gardens and taught the subject to the new class of Master Gardeners. And has periodic opportunities to spread the word about this beautiful and environmentally beneficial landscape feature. Dan, who is a member at St. Peter the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, has helped coordinate the maintenance of the riparian buffer plantings at the church, along Coppermine Branch. Challenging weather conditions resulted in above average mortality of one portion of an initial planting.

Dan helped replant the area and maintain and water the new plants during difficult drought conditions. Learning more about the threat of invasive plants and with advice from **DNR Forester, Mike Kay**, Dan helped prepare the association's 6-acre open space site for planting of a native tree buffer and a perennial warm season grass meadow. To facilitate success, Dan identified invasive plants on adjoining neighboring properties and met with neighbors to elicit their participation in weed control. Earlene helped select shrubs and herbaceous plants for the four rain gardens that were installed at Libertytown Park. She, Dan, and Kayla helped plant these gardens, joined by two other homeowners from Liberty Village. If you're wondering what motivates these two, your curiosity might be at least partially satisfied when you hear Earlene say, "I've never had this much fun!" She might be talking about working with 20 third graders at Liberty Elementary, selecting plants for the last rain garden at Libertytown Park, or enjoying seeing which new plants thrive in particular niches in the landscape. Their enthusiasm is infectious! And wildlife and water quality have certainly benefited from their learning, actions and commitment.